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ABSTRACT

Assessment within the SWRL English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish Speaking Children (LCS) consists of a placement aid, unit assessments, unit reviews, and an End of Program Assessment. All assessments are administered on a one-to-one basis. At the beginning of the school year, the LCS Placement Aid is administered for purposes of measuring each pupil's proficiency in using English vocabulary, pronunciation, and other language skills requisite to effective communication. The results of this test indicate the level at which a pupil should begin the program, or if he should move directly into the basal reading program. Unit Assessment Cards are provided at the end of each lesson unit to check each pupil's ability to comprehend and produce the language structures developed in the unit. Following the unit assessment, a unit review is conducted. This provides a basis for assigning further practice on unit objectives which pupils have not attained. The End of Program Test assesses the student's capability to retain the skills taught in the program. An important objective in the development of LCS has been to develop instructional assessment strategies and operational procedures that will help integrate the program into extant bicultural, bilingual programs. (BB)

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# Assessment in an Instructional Program Designed for Spanish-Speaking Children Acquiring English Language Skills

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# Assessment in an Instructional Program Designed for Spanish-Speaking Children Acquiring English Language Skills

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Assessment is not limited to test presentation. For centuries teachers have informally been assessing language performance during the presentation of a lesson and in most cases doing it quite well. However, regularly scheduled assessments provided by an instructional program can be used to systematically appraise skills acquired prior to instruction, during, and at the end of the instructional program. Assessment scores, along with attendance records, can be most useful in evaluating program effectiveness and in conducting follow-up studies which evaluate student progress beyond the Program. Examples are provided from the SWRL English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish-Speaking Children (LCS).

Assessment presented prior to instruction: An assessment presented prior to instruction aids the teacher in making a decision in regard to whether or not a student should enter the program. Since a teacher has additional knowledge about the student, a teacher should use the assessment score in conjunction with other information in making her decision. If, in the judgment of the teacher, the program is appropriate to the learner's needs, the test score can be used as a guide for placing him in the section of the program where he will benefit most from instruction. The assessment booklet should have suggested starting points based on the student's performance. The skills to be assessed are:

1. Syntactic skills

| | Exemplars | |
|---|---|---|
| | Questions | Responses |
| Minimal phrase responses | What is the girl doing? | Sleeping |
| Full sentence responses | Tell Ellie that you are tired. | I'm tired. |

2. Phonological skills: Rather than attempt to carry out technical phonetic descriptions, teachers should rate children using descriptive statements:

    a. Does not speak English.

    b. Speaks English with an accent.

    c. Speaks English without an accent.

The assessment should be administered on a one to one basis and take approximately five minutes to administer and score. Since the purpose of the assessment is to aid in the selection and placement of students, it should contain tasks of graduated difficulty to ensure that children in the greatest need of the program are selected.

Assessment during the instructional program: Block assessments provided at unit intervals inform the teachers of needed remediation. The most complex items within a block should be tested. Remediation exercises should be provided by the instructional program for students who answered incorrectly any of the questions. The exercises should fulfill these design requirements:

1. Reteach the criterion item.

2. Provide practice in carrying out the skill in the context of previously taught related items, e.g., criterion item: above, related items: below /in/on/by

Assessment at the end of an instructional program: Tests administered at the end of the school year determine to what degree children have retained the program objectives. It is expected that the end of program assessment would be more difficult and contain more items than the test administered prior to instruction. The most difficult items representing various skill areas should be sampled.

1. Imperatives involving psychomotor responses, e.g.,

| Stimuli | Directions to student | Response |
|---|---|---|
| Child sees a picture consisting of several pens and several books. | Point to each book. | Child points to each book. |

2. Oral concept discrimination response, e.g.,

| Stimuli | Directions to student | Response |
|---|---|---|
| Child sees a small black rectangle and a large white rectangle. | Which is bigger, the white rectangle or the black rectangle? | The white rectangle. |

3. Production of sentences calling for various types of responses, e.g.:

Student response embedded in the question.

A. CONTEXT: Ellie holds the yellow pencil.

B. REQUEST: Ellie thinks the pencil is red, tell Ellie, "It is yellow."

C. RESPONSE: [It is / It's / The pencil is] yellow.

D. REINFORCEMENT: Thank you.

Student response calling for morphological and simple transformational operations.

A. CONTEXT: Ellie looks at pupil.

B. REQUEST: Tell Ellie that you are tired.

C. RESPONSE: [I am / I'm] tired.

D. REINFORCEMENT: Ellie says, you should rest more.

Responses calling for more complex transformations, e.g., do-support with morphological changes.

A. CONTEXT: Ellie picks up the book.

B. REQUEST: Ask Ellie, what she has.

C. RESPONSE: What do you have?

D. REINFORCEMENT: Ellie answers, I have a book.

General testing procedures: Testing within a situational context is desirable in assessing learners of all ages and is indispensable for testing very young children. Real objects, posters, flashcards, and the use of puppets aid in establishing communication contexts in iliciting desired responses. Testing of young children should be conducted on an individual basis.

Children should demonstrate by their performance in the unit and end of program assessments that they can produce sentences beyond those taught in the lessons. In the early stage of the instructional program syntactic assessment items should be recombined with previously learned vocabulary to produce sentences which differ from those taught, e.g.,

sentence in lesson: I see a crayon on the table.

book is from a previous lesson: I see a book on the table.

As children progress through the program, it is expected that they produce previously presented syntactic items with newly learned syntax. The

assessment questions should reflect the ability to produce sentences composed of novel recombinations:

| | |
|---|---|
| sentence in lesson: | What did Bill catch? |
| underlined syntactic item is from a previous lesson: | <u>Did</u> Bill catch the ball? |

<u>Assessments within the LCS Program</u>: A Placement Aid, Unit Assessments, Unit Reviews, and an End of Program Assessment are provided. All assessments are administered on a one-to-one basis.

Placement Aid: At the beginning of the school year, the LCS Placement Aid is administered by the teacher to help her decide which Spanish-speaking pupils should enter the LCS Program. The LCS Placement Aid measures each pupil's proficiency in using English vocabulary, pronunciation, and other language skills requisite to effective communication. The results of this test, when used in conjunction with the teacher's knowledge about each pupil, indicate whether a given pupil should enter the LCS Program at the beginning (Unit 1), at a more advanced level (Unit 9), or if he should move directly into the basal reading program.

Accompanying the placement booklet is an LCS Placement Guide which contains directions for administering the test. Recommendations for selecting the appropriate instructional alternative and a record sheet for recording individual pupil responses are also provided in this guide.

End of Unit Assessment and Review: Unit Assessment Cards are provided at the end of each 15 lesson unit to check each pupil's ability to comprehend and produce the language structures developed in the unit. One card includes directions for conducting the assessment, a list of materials needed,

the 10 assessment questions, and a grid for recording individual pupil responses. The accompanying concept card is used in conjunction with the assessment questions and review activities.

Following the Unit Assessment, a Unit Review is conducted. The Unit Review card provides a basis for assigning further practice on unit outcomes which individual pupils have not yet attained. The review card describes 10 activities which are keyed to the 10 assessment questions, allowing the teacher to provide each pupil with practice on the particular outcomes needed. Directions and materials for conducting each activity are explained.

The End-of-Program Test assesses the children's capability to retain the outcomes taught in the program. The test primarily is based on syntactic and conceptual tasks that are taught in the second half of the Program. Children are expected to respond to complex sentence structure and carry out directions, and produce complex phrases and sentences consistent with the instruction.

Tryout Results: The English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish-Speaking Children (LCS) as used in the tryout accomplished the prespecified instructional objectives at a high level of proficiency (Molina, 1973). The Program proved manageable by teachers and remarkably robust under a wide range of school and classroom conditions. A follow-up in 1973 of children who participated in the 1971-1972 tryout shows that LCS not only accomplishes the program specific oral language and concept outcomes but bears strongly on subsequent pupil success with regular classroom instruction. Teacher ratings of pupil performance demonstrated that only three percent of all the children who had participated in the tryout were

unable to cope with regular instruction. Of greater importance possibly is the potency of LCS to help teachers provide young children with inadequate entering English language skills an English language repertoire to succeed in various subject matter areas. In this connection an important objective in the development of LCS has been to develop instructional, assessment strategies and operational procedures that will help integrate the Program into extant bi-cultural, bilingual programs that will strengthen and extend the Hispanic cultural characteristics.

## REFERENCES

Molina, Huberto. The SWRL English Language and Concepts Program for Spanish-Speaking Children: 1971-1972 Tryout, SWRL Educational Research and Development, Technical Report No. 46, 1973.